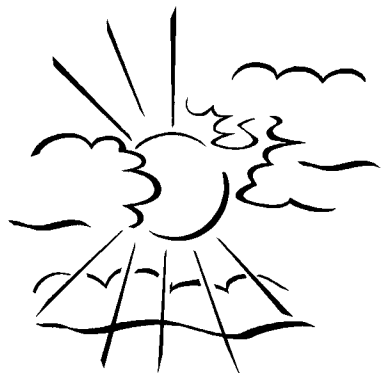


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, March 16, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Letters to the editor

How much blame for state in child's death?

March 16, 2006
Detroit Free Press

In your March 7 article "Inmate says mom admitted killing son: She hit 7-year-old with a hammer, woman testifies," you told the story of what Ricky Holland's "mother" allegedly did. Lisa Holland, if what is recounted is true, deserves the most harsh punishment our state allows.

However, Lisa and Tim Holland are not the only ones culpable here. The state was well aware of the abuse and humiliation that Ricky and his siblings were suffering, as documented by Child Protective Services. To make matters worse, it was the state that put Ricky in that home in the first place. There has been no mention of what situation Ricky was removed from that the state deemed more dangerous than the Holland home.

Confidentiality laws will protect the state from divulging that information. The confidentiality laws will do nothing for Ricky. How much responsibility falls on the state for both placing Ricky in that home and for ignoring the numerous documented instances of abuse and neglect?

Mark Valenti
Lincoln Park

Woman charged in heroin case

Neighbors: We were worried by activity at home where boy was injected with drug

PUBLISHED: March 15, 2006

By Amanda Lee
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A Warren woman accused of injecting her nephew with heroin was charged with two felony counts Tuesday that could net her up to 40 years in prison.

Jacqueline Ellen Vuich, 25, is accused of delivering a controlled substance to a minor, a felony that could get her up to 40 years in prison and/or a \$25,000 fine.

Police allege that Vuich injected her 12-year-old nephew with heroin on Jan. 24 at the boy's grandmother's home on Cottage Lane in the 10 Mile Road and Groesbeck area in Warren. The boy was reportedly eating spaghetti at the time when Vuich took a syringe and injected a brown liquid near the elbow of one of his arms.

The boy became ill and relatives rushed him to Henry Ford Bi-County Hospital after finding him unresponsive. Blood tests revealed a heroin overdose and the hospital called police.

Vuich was arrested by Warren police at the home of another relative in Chesterfield Township on Monday after a weeklong hunt by police.

The unidentified victim -- and four other children residing in the Cottage Lane home -- has been removed by Child Protective Services.

The red brick home where the incident occurred was quiet Tuesday and no one answered the door, but neighbors in the quiet area say they aren't surprised that something like this happened there.

"I didn't know anyone that lived there but when I would walk my dog past the house I would always see these little kids without jackets on playing in cold weather and I just knew something was going to happen to one of them," said Helen Pruest, 54, who lives around the corner from the home. "I'm not surprised in the least. At least someone is taking care of those kids, though."

Another female neighbor, who declined to be identified, said she always wondered if there was something illegal going on in the home.

"You'd see people coming and going at all hours of the night," she said. "That's just not normal."

The woman said she'd seen Vuich at the home a number of times.

"That girl needs some help," she said.

Vuich has had numerous run-ins with the law, including drug charges, writing bad checks and shoplifting. Also, according to Macomb County Circuit Court documents, she is also currently going through a divorce.

Investigators still don't have a clear motive for the crime but, according to televised reports, Vuich told 37th District Court Judge Dawnn Gruenberg that she'd dealt with a lot of issues in her life.

Vuich is expected to be in court again within the next few weeks for her preliminary examination.

Monroe boy, 3, takes pot onto school bus

story updated March 14. 2006 11:26AM

A 3-year-old boy was carrying marijuana in his hand as he boarded a Monroe school bus Monday morning.

Local drug enforcement police officers said the pot most likely belonged to one of the boy's parents and the youth probably didn't understand what he was doing. Still, investigating a possession of marijuana case at his age was a first.

"I've never seen a 3-year-old take marijuana to school," said Lt. Luke Davis of the Office of Monroe Narcotics Investigations (OMNI). "I've seen 10-year-old dealers in Detroit, but that's the youngest I've ever seen."

The youngster lives in Greenwycke Commons off S. Monroe St. and was boarding the bus for preschool when an aide noticed he was carrying something in his hand, Lt. Davis said.

She asked him what he was carrying, and the youth showed her a plastic bag with a small amount of marijuana inside. The aide then contacted authorities.

Lt. Davis went to the family apartment and interviewed the boy's mother. She reportedly told the officer that the pot probably was hers. Lt. Davis asked to look inside her apartment, and the woman consented.

And when Lt. Davis found another bag of marijuana in her purse, the woman seemed a bit surprised. She allegedly said the pot in her purse was hers, so the marijuana her son was carrying must be someone else's.

Lt. Davis said the youth told authorities that he found the plastic bag inside his father's car.

The boy was released to his parents. They were not arrested, but they could face criminal charges of possession of marijuana and perhaps child neglect. The **Department of Human Services** also is involved.

Boy Brings Marijuana On Bus

Parents Could Face Charges

POSTED: 4:46 pm EST March 15, 2006

A school bus assistant in Monroe made a startling discovery Tuesday.

The assistant noticed a 3-year-old boy getting on the school bus with a small plastic bag in his hands, Local 4 reported.

Inside the bag was marijuana.

The boy's mother told police she had marijuana inside the home, but the boy told police he found the bag in his father's car, according to police.

The parents could be charged with drug possession and child neglect.

Police are investigating.

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27 Charged in International Online Child Pornography Ring

By GRETCHEN RUETHLING
The New York Times

Published: March 16, 2006

CHICAGO, March 15 — Federal and international authorities have charged 27 people in nine states and three other countries in connection with an Internet child pornography ring that federal authorities say is one of the worst they have discovered.

Live video images of children being molested were transmitted over the Internet, the authorities said.

"The behavior in these chat rooms and the images many of these defendants sent around the world through peer-to-peer file-sharing programs and private instant messaging services are the worst imaginable forms of child pornography," Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales said at a news conference in Chicago, where the indictments were announced Wednesday.

Federal and state charges, including the manufacture, possession and distribution of child pornography, have been filed against 13 people in Illinois, Tennessee, Michigan, Nevada, Florida, New York, Arizona, Hawaii and North Carolina. Charges have also been brought against 14 defendants in Canada, Australia and Britain.

"Some of the aspects of this case are truly horrifying," said Julie L. Myers, assistant secretary for United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, at the news conference. "It's hard to find cases more heinous than those that involve the exploitation of children."

Mr. Gonzales said one of the victims was under 18 months old.

The defendants are accused of trading thousands of images of child pornography over at least the past year in a private Internet chat room called Kiddypics & Kiddyvids. Four of them are also accused of molesting seven children, who are now in protective custody, Mr. Gonzales said.

Ms. Myers said the case reflected three larger trends that are becoming more common in child pornography rings.

One is the increasing prevalence of "home-grown" pornographic images that are produced by predators themselves and include live streaming video images of children being molested, not just the circulation of repeated images, she said.

Another trend is the growing use of sophisticated security measures and of peer-to-peer networking, where participants can share files with one another on their computers rather than downloading them off a Web site, she said. The group used encryption and data destruction software to protect the files and screening measures to ensure only authorized participants could enter the chat room.

A third trend is the increasingly violent and graphic nature of the images involving the molesting of younger children, Ms. Myers said.

The international investigation began in May 2005 with the arrest of a participant in Edmonton, Alberta.

According to indictments returned Tuesday by a grand jury against four defendants in Chicago, participants shared files and used instant messaging to transmit images under screen names like Big_Daddy619, Lord Newbie and A_School_Teacher.

Many of the defendants had "ongoing access" to children, said Deputy Chief Tony Warr of the Toronto Police Service, which was involved in the investigation. He said investigators used software specially developed by Microsoft to track and identify hits on pornographic sites. The chat room's primary host, Royal Raymond Weller of Clarksville, Tenn., was arrested last week. Mr. Weller, 49, a service repairman whose screen name was G.O.D., used a strict security system and would kick out participants if they used forbidden words like "incest" or "cam" in their messages, said Paul M. O'Brien, an assistant United States attorney in Nashville. Mr. Weller has not entered a plea. All 27 defendants face child pornography charges in the United States or abroad or have already been prosecuted abroad. One defendant is a fugitive.

Theo Emery contributed reporting from Nashville for this article.

Best friend testifies in Yost murder trial

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By CRYSTAL HARMON
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Mary I. Gomez was Donna Yost's best friend and neighbor back in 1999, and her memories of how Yost acted the night her 7-year-old daughter died contradicted other witnesses' accounts.

"She was very emotional," Gomez said. "She cried the entire time at the hospital."

Yost, 46, is charged with an open count of murder in the death of Monique Yost. Earlier witnesses who testified in the ongoing jury trial had described Donna Yost as unemotional and odd-acting on the evening of Oct. 10, 1999, after Monique went into seizures and later died. Gomez became choked up as she told the jury in the Bay County courtroom of Judge William J. Caprathe of her observations of Donna as a mother.

"She loved those kids," Gomez said. "I never saw her so much as lift a hand to them."

Gomez said she joined Yost nearly every morning at 6:30 a.m. for coffee before heading off to work, and that Monique "always seemed happy."

"She'd say 'I love you Mary,'" Gomez said. "I can still hear her little voice."

Gomez said she and Donna were sitting down to a game of dominoes in Yost's home at 200 N. Madison Ave. at about 6 p.m. on Oct. 10 and Donna went to the living room several times to check on Monique.

Yost said she put the child down for a nap but Monique wouldn't wake up, Gomez said, adding that she'd never known Monique to take naps before.

It was Gomez who drove Yost to the hospital after paramedics whisked Monique away as she was dying.

"I stayed with her until they pronounced her dead," Gomez said.

Gomez said in the days after Monique's death, she went with Donna on several occasions up a back staircase off the kitchen to a room where the two would sit quietly and avoid other people. So it was shocking, Gomez said, when Yost's older daughter, Jessica, called her three days after Monique's death to say that a bottle of pills had been found on the floor of that room.

"They were definitely not there before," Gomez said. "We had no idea how they got there."

The pills were Imipramine capsules - the type of anti-depressant medication that caused Monique's death.

Toxicologist Michael Evans, who'd analyzed Monique's blood, used scientific formulas to explain to the jury his finding that it was a single massive dose of the pills that killed her.

"This person died shortly after ingestion of this drug," he said, "... within about four hours after administration."

Again Wednesday, jurors took full advantage of the opportunity afforded them by the judge to pose questions, through him, to the witnesses. Of Evans, they wanted to know if Monique suffered before she died. Evans answered that it would not have been a pleasant death such as might be caused by a morphine overdose.

"She did not just go to sleep," he said.

For Gomez, jurors had 13 questions, such as if she knew where the Yost kept the family medications, (in a cabinet, Gomez said), whether the older daughter was home when the pills

were found (she was, according to Gomez) and whether Monique ever engaged in sexual activities with Gomez's children (she said she was unaware of any such contact.)

Prosecutors allege that Yost may have killed Monique to avoid an appointment that had been scheduled for the following day to discuss allegations that Monique had been sexually assaulted by a teenage boy and possibly by Monique's brother.

Yost's defense team has claimed that Yost was unaware of such an appointment because it had never been scheduled.

Gomez, however, said Yost had discussed the appointment with her about a week before Monique's death, and was concerned about the stress it would cause Monique to discuss the matter.

Testimony was to continue at 9 a.m. today.

Medical examiner: Infant may have died while sleeping

Trace Christenson

The Battle Creek Enquirer

ALBION — A six-month-old Albion child may have died after his mother asphyxiated him while sleeping.

The child, who has not been identified by the Albion Department of Public Safety, died Monday. Robert Demski, an investigator for the Calhoun County Medical Examiner, said the child died while sleeping in a bed with his mother.

Demski said an autopsy found no apparent cause of death of the child, and it's probable that the child died of suffocation.

"There was nothing wrong with the baby, he had no apparent health problems," Demski said Wednesday. "The probable cause is co-sleeping."

Demski said there were no apparent signs of abuse.

He said laboratory tests on the child, including toxicology, will take eight to 10 weeks to complete and are needed to rule out other possible causes of death.

Albion police were called to a home in the 700 block of West Broadwell Street about 6:45 a.m. Monday, where they found the child.

While some parents have advocated co-sleeping, which is practiced in many non-Western cultures, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has warned for years against placing infants in beds with adults.

The agency said 515 deaths nationwide were linked to co-sleeping from January 1990 to December 1997.

The investigation into the death is continuing by Albion police, who have declined to release additional information.

Trace Christenson covers crime and courts. He can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

Originally published March 16, 2006

Teacher can't change his past

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- The victim of a former West Middle School teacher, convicted 20 years ago of trying to accost her, believes justice is served now that he must be fired from his current teaching job in Southfield.

"I'm extremely happy," said Naomi Colella, now 34, of Holland. "It's just knowing he is not going to be able to teach and have the opportunity to do it again."

But supporters of Timothy Romisch, 46, believe the judge made the wrong decision in refusing Wednesday to erase Romisch's conviction.

"I've seen his life and what he transformed it from and what it is now," said Mike Thomas, a friend of Romisch for nearly 20 years. "I know him to be a good husband, a loving dad and well-respected in school. He is not a danger to anyone."

Because the conviction stands, the Detroit-area school must fire Romisch under a state law that took effect Jan. 1.

"It doesn't look like the school has any options," said Duane Reynolds, an attorney for Southfield Christian School where Romisch teaches eighth-grade science. "He'll have to be let go."

Holland District Judge Brad Knoll, saying he did not want to circumvent a new law meant to oust teachers with certain convictions, rejected Romisch's request to expunge his 1986 misdemeanor conviction for attempting to accost a child for immoral purposes.

The decision sparked more debate on whether the law is too inflexible.

"To deny a man his livelihood 20 years after the fact, it just seems unreasonable," Reynolds said.

"He has met every requirement of the state (education department) and has proved himself worthy of the trust put in him."

Thomas said it's hard to understand how the law can allow a teacher in Escanaba -- convicted of fatally stabbing a man 23 years ago -- to keep his job with school board approval, yet require Romisch's firing.

Colella did not know until February that Romisch had started teaching again after he left Holland. He has taught since 1992 at Southfield Christian without incident.

"That was quite a surprise when I did find out," she said. "It made me very angry."

Romisch resigned as a Holland Public Schools teacher in 1986 amid allegations he sent the 14-year-old student sexually explicit letters, some with pornographic pictures attached, and called her home. He was arrested when he tried to meet her alone. He later pleaded no contest.

Afterward, he received therapy, joined a church, raised a family and led what friends and supervisors call an exemplary life.

Romisch sought expungement because the new law prohibits anyone convicted of an offense listed in the state sex offender registry from working at a public or private school. Southfield Christian defended Romisch, calling him a valuable asset.

Knoll acknowledged Romisch has led a seemingly changed life since 1986 and likely would not repeat any criminal behavior, but said he must consider the victim. She testified at a February expungement hearing.

"It was clear from her testimony there are deep scars caused by his behavior," Knoll said. He also was troubled by Romisch's apparent inability to recall many details about the letters and testimony that only one was sexually suggestive. Setting aside the conviction, he said, would go against the "express desire" of the Michigan Legislature. Romisch and his attorney, Richard Swaney, could not be reached for comment.

Mar 15, 4:23 PM EST

U.S. Charges 27 in Online Child Porn Ring

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press Writer

CHICAGO (AP) -- Participants in an international Internet chat room transmitted live visuals of child molestation and traded thousands of pictures of child pornography, federal authorities said Wednesday in announcing charges against 27 people.

U.S. and international authorities have charged 27 people who took part in the Kiddypics & Kiddyvids chat room. The youngest child seen in pictures or video was less than 18 months old, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said in announcing the results of the 10-month investigation. The defendants include Brian A. Annoreno of Chicago, who prosecutors say molested an infant and transmitted it live to a viewer in the Canadian city of Edmonton.

"The behavior in the chat room and the images sent around the world ... are the worst imaginable form of child pornography," Gonzales said at a news conference in Chicago.

Investigators identified seven children who were molested on the streaming video, Gonzales said. Four molesters are among those charged, prosecutors said.

Thirteen people have been indicted in nine states on charges that include possession, receipt, distribution and manufacture of child pornography. The states are: Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New York, North Carolina and Tennessee.

The other 14 have been charged in Australia, Canada and Britain. One person remains at large. The investigation began with an arrest in Edmonton last May.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a unit of the Homeland Security Department, led the U.S. investigation.

Undercover agents gained entry to the chat room and identified the 27 people, initially through their screen names, officials said.

DHS Assistant Secretary Julie Myers said investigators told her this case was among the worst they've seen. "It's hard to find cases more heinous than those that involve child molestation," Myers said.

Gonzales has made crimes against children and online pornography top priorities for the Justice Department.

Also Wednesday, the Justice Department said it has quadrupled prosecutions of human trafficking crimes when comparing the first five years of the Bush administration with the last five years of the Clinton administration.

There were 91 cases in which people were accused of forcing women and children to work in sweatshops or prostitution between 2001 and 2005, the department said in a new report. There were 109 people convicted in that period, more than twice as many as in the preceding five years.

On the Net:

Justice Department: <http://www.usdoj.gov>

Homeland Security Department: <http://www.dhs.gov>

Sting traces 'startling' rise of child porn on Internet

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

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GRAND RAPIDS -- A 38-year-old Kalamazoo man was indicted Wednesday by a federal grand jury on charges of possession of child pornography as part of a case U.S. Attorney Margaret Chiara said represents the "startling increase" in the extent of the material on the Internet. According to the three-page indictment, investigators searched James Samuel Allen's Sunfield Street residence in Kalamazoo on March 6 and seized a compact disc containing more than 80 images obtained over the Internet that depicted children as young as 6 years old engaged in sexual activity.

Allen, a resident of North Carolina who moved to Michigan last fall, was arrested Friday and was to be arraigned in U.S. District Court today. He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted. Chiara, who announced the indictment at a press conference in Grand Rapids that included U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials and Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety Chief Dan Weston, said the search of Allen's residence was one of several conducted nationwide last week following a 10-month federal investigation.

Allen, authorities allege, helped operate an Internet chat and file-sharing room called "Kiddypics & Kiddyvids" that had been operating for three years. Members of the room used a peer-to-peer file-sharing program and other software to share child pornography, according to a 50-page affidavit filed March 3 by ICE Special Agent Derryk Burgess.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard S. Murray said Allen was an administrator for the chat room and had privileges given to him by a room "host." Investigators identified the alleged host as Royal Raymond Weller, of Clarksville, Tenn., who was arrested March 6 on child-pornography charges.

Besides Allen and Weller, 25 other people in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain were arrested. Thirteen of the 27 are U.S. residents, investigators said, and have been charged with offenses that include possession, receipt, distribution and manufacture of child pornography.

Weston said Department of Public Safety investigators watched Allen for four months prior to his arrest. Weston said authorities searched Allen's home and a residence on Cork Street where Allen had lived previously and seized two computers.

Earlier Wednesday in Chicago, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said in a news release that seven children who were victims of molestation were identified during the investigation and that four alleged molesters are among the 27 who were arrested.

Molester faces more charges

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Steven Hepker
shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Concord man imprisoned for habitually raping his girlfriend's daughter will stand trial for allegedly trying to arrange a hit on witnesses to his criminal sex case.

Robert Reaster, 33, will be arraigned in Jackson County Circuit Court on April 4 for solicitation of murder. District Judge Charles Falahee Jr. bound Reaster over for trial Wednesday after a preliminary hearing.

A Jackson County Jail inmate testified Reaster offered him \$1,000 to kill the father of the girl he sexually assaulted, and to injure the girl's stepmother.

"He asked if I knew someone who could make witnesses not show up in court," said Farland Isaac, serving 300 days for felonious assault and larceny.

Isaac said the inmates in his 12-man cell saw a TV show or read a newspaper story about witnesses killed before they could testify. A few days later, he said, Reaster said he could help him post bond if he could get one witness killed and the other hurt.

Reaster gave him directions to the couple's house and their names, he said. Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates submitted the document as evidence.

Isaac said he did not intend to participate, and he sent a letter to Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker with his story. State police and prosecutors hatched a scheme in which Isaac claimed the money would have to go to his brother, Walter, and that his brother needed to hear directly from Reaster.

Walter was actually prosecution investigator Melvin Hartman. Isaac said he called him one day in October and talked loudly so that Reaster could hear him discuss the plan from the cell.

Isaac said Reaster continually asked him what was happening regarding his proposal. Officials eventually transferred Isaac from the cell before Reaster was charged with solicitation of murder. Reaster pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and Schmucker sentenced him to 25 to 50 years in prison in November.

County sheriff's investigators said Reaster had sexually assaulted his girlfriend's daughter for 18 months, starting when she was 8 years old. He forced her to watch pornographic videos and then re-enacted the scenes when her mother was out of the house, detectives said.

Thetford man faces child porn charges

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Kim Crawford, Ken Palmer and Bryn Mickle
kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

A 28-year-old man who called himself "mag1ck_hands" is charged with e-mailing pornographic photos of children from the basement of his father's Thetford Township home.

Alan E. Sain allegedly sent an undercover FBI agent several images of child porn last week and told the agent he had a couple of his own child porn videos.

A handwritten note in one of the images stated "I am as real as it gets," according to a federal criminal complaint.

Sain was arrested at his father's home Wednesday morning and is being held in the Genesee County Jail pending a hearing in federal court Monday.

He is charged with transporting child pornography and faces the possibility of 5-20 years in prison.

On Wednesday, Sain told U.S. Magistrate Wallace Capel Jr. that he is unemployed and asked for a court-appointed lawyer.

The FBI began investigating Sain last month after an undercover agent logged onto Yahoo! as a 36-year-old divorced mother "looking for Daddy for Family Fun."

Two minutes later, Sain allegedly sent the woman an instant message and began chatting.

Last week, he allegedly told the agent "what really turns me on ... is to open the eyes of a girl ... to the world ..."

When the agent asked him if he had really experienced what he was talking about, Sain replied "well ... 2 instances when I was 17 ... and one recently ..."

Sain, she testified, sent her more pictures on March 8 and in messages provided "some specific information regarding the female child in the images." The affidavit, however, doesn't say what the relationship was between Sain and the child who appears in the pictures.

Officials said his arrest was not related to an international Internet child porn bust in which 27 people were charged from Michigan to Australia.

Court Discretion

Leave tough sentencing of molesters to judges

March 16, 2006

It's not easy to find the courage to vote against a bill that purports to get tough on people convicted of sexually assaulting children. The handful of Michigan legislators who did, though, were right. Bills that set mandatory minimum sentences for such offenses are unnecessary and ineffective. They could even have the opposite effect intended by leading to more plea bargains. The package of bills, passed overwhelmingly by the House on Tuesday, calls for mandatory sentences of at least 25 years for anyone 17 or older convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct against a child under the age of 13. The bills also call for 10 years of parole, instead of the standard two, and lifetime electronic monitoring. A similar law costs Florida about \$7 million a year.

In Michigan, such sexual offenders already are subject to sentences of up to life, and they're doing some of the hardest time in the country -- an average of 21.6 years. In fact, the Michigan average for time served is slightly higher than is mandated in Florida, the model for the Michigan bill. Unlike Michigan, Florida requires offenders to serve only 85% of a sentence, or 21.3 years of a mandatory 25. Sexual offenders of all kinds are the least likely to be released by the Michigan State Parole Board; only 11% see parole granted. State prisons now hold at least 2,500 inmates who have committed sex crimes covered by the bills.

One-size-fits-all sentencing serves neither justice nor the taxpayer. That's why Michigan legislators sensibly repealed the state's drug lifer law in 1998. Judges get paid to take into account individual circumstances in sentencing. In some cases, a 25-year or even life sentence is warranted; in others, it is not.

It will take courage, but the state Senate should get beyond the emotion and reject a bill that would do nothing to further the interests of children or justice in Michigan.

Man arraigned here on sex assault charges

Wednesday, March 15, 2006 1:39 PM EST

A Brutus man who was arrested in late February by Florida authorities on a 21-count felony warrant from Emmet County is now back in the county to face the charges.

Joel Nathan DuFresne, 27, was arraigned in Emmet County's 90th District Court Monday on 20 counts of criminal sexual conduct and one count of extortion. The criminal sexual conduct charges include both first degree and third degree counts. The charges are punishable by up to life and up to 15 years in prison respectively.

Troopers from the Petoskey post traveled to Florida last week and brought DuFresne back to Petoskey on Friday. He remains lodged at the Emmet County Jail in lieu of a \$500,000 cash or surety bond.

Authorities said the rape and extortion allegations came to light while Michigan State Police officials were investigating claims that DuFresne had kidnapped his 14-month-old son in mid-February.

On Feb. 20, Emmet County Probate Court Judge Frederick Mulhauser signed a warrant ordering any police officer or protective services worker to take physical custody of DuFresne's 14-month-old son, when the child's mother reported to authorities that DuFresne had taken the child from her home on Feb. 14 and had not returned.

According to court documents, the boy's mother was concerned for her son's safety primarily because of DuFresne's ties to a white supremacist group called "The Creativity Movement" or "Skinheads of the Racial Holy Wars." The group's Web site lists "The Rev. Joel DuFresne" and a post office box in Petoskey as a contact person for more information about the group.

Adoptive Parents Give Up Rights To 12 Children

Couple Accused Of Physical Abuse

POSTED: 5:16 pm EST March 15, 2006
ClickOnDETROIT

A couple once chosen as Michigan's adoptive parents of the year but who later found themselves accused of physically abusing their adopted children agreed on Wednesday to give up parental rights to 12 of the children.

Beryl and Jerome Richards had been in court-ordered treatment intended to ultimately reunite them with the children, who range in age from 7 to 17, said David Murkowski, the couple's attorney.

But the Richardses decided that hard feelings held by some of the children who did not want to return to their care, along with a nearly year-long separation, were obstacles too big to overcome.

"They have come to the conclusion that this is an egg that can't be unscrambled," Murkowski told The Grand Rapids Press.

Vicki Seidl, an assistant prosecutor for Kent County who sought to terminate the couple's parental rights, said she did not consider this a victory.

"In a lot of ways, this is a really sad case because nobody wins," she said. "It's only a victory because the kids will now have a little permanency."

After allegations of abuse surfaced, the children were removed from the Richardses' home last spring. They now live in six foster homes. Kristan Newhouse, an attorney representing 11 of the children, said they will be placed into permanent homes.

The couple was not charged criminally, but a court hearing was held last fall to determine whether they should lose their parental rights.

The adopted children testified that they were abused and subjected to beatings with leather belts and an electrical extension cord. They said they were not fed properly and feared being sent back to the couple.

The Richardses denied being abusive and suggested that their form of discipline was Bible-based. In December, a jury ruled that their parental rights should be severed and the court should have jurisdiction over the children.

Judge Nanaruth Carpenter of Kent County Family Court opposed terminating the couple's parental rights, however, and gave them an opportunity to regain custody by taking part in a treatment plan.

The Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association selected the couple as the state's adoptive parents of the year in 2002 after they adopted their 13th child. One of those children is now an adult.

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Carlie Brucia's Rapist, Killer Gets Death Penalty

Joseph Smith Sentenced To Life In Prison For Kidnapping

POSTED: 8:56 am EST March 15, 2006

UPDATED: 3:36 pm EST March 15, 2006

SARASOTA, Fla. -- The man convicted of abducting, raping and slaying 11-year-old Carlie Brucia was sentenced Wednesday in Sarasota.

Judge Andrew D. Owens sentenced Joseph Smith to death for Carlie's murder, saying "May God have mercy on your soul."

Earlier he was sentenced to two sentences of life in prison without possibility of parole with credit for time served for Carlie's kidnapping and assault. He has 30 days to appeal that sentence. A jury had recommended by a vote of 10-2 that Joseph Smith be executed. Owens was required by law to give great weight to that recommendation when he makes his ruling Wednesday. During a hearing last month, Smith tearfully apologized for his crimes. He told the judge that he took large amounts of heroin and cocaine and tried to kill himself before he abducted Carlie on Feb. 1, 2004.

Smith said he didn't remember much about that day and asked Owens to spare him for the sake of his family.

Carlie's abduction was caught by a security camera and aired nationally. Her body was found four days after her disappearance on the grounds of a Sarasota church.

Owens read a statement during the sentencing.

On Sunday, Feb. 1, 2004, Carlie left a girlfriend's home and was walking home, the judge said. She cut across the parking lot of a car wash, taking a shortcut home. A friend of the family saw Carlie walking and sent her husband to find her. He was unable to locate the girl. After an hour and a half of searching for Carlie, they called 911.

In their search for the girl, police came across the videotape of Carlie's abduction. A surveillance camera at a car wash showed Smith grabbing the girl by the arm. When the videotape was released nationally by the media, several calls came in identifying Smith as the kidnapper. He was wearing a mechanic's uniform that said "Joe" on it.

Smith was arrested for unrelated drug charges on Feb. 3 and for violating terms of his probation.

On Feb. 5, John Smith visited his brother, Joseph, who was in police custody. The suspect's brother then took police to the area where Carlie's body was left. She was found dead on church grounds in the exact area that Joseph Smith told his brother she was.

Smith admitted having rough sex with the child and his semen was found on her clothing, according to the judge.

The judge believes that Smith killed Carlie so that he would not be arrested in her kidnapping and rape. The judge said that he has no doubt the crime was sexually motivated. And instead of letting Carlie live after her rape, he chose to kill her.

Carlie's cause of death was ligature strangulation, the judge said. But the ligatures were never found.

A doctor's report said that Carlie's hands were restrained during her strangulation and that the girl had no defensive wounds. The doctor found that Carlie was conscious when the ligature was put around her neck. So he found that she must have been restrained before being killed. The court found that Carlie endured unspeakable trauma that started the moment she was kidnapped, the judge said. He said the image of the girl being kidnapped would forever be etched in his mind. "If ever a victim can be described as defenseless and subdued, it was Carlie," the judge said. "He had other options available to him, but for reasons we'll never know, he chose to ignore them." The judge said that Smith not only chose to ignore those options, but he held the ligature so tight against her neck that it dug into her flesh.

After killing Carlie, Smith dragged the girl to a wooded area so as to avoid detection, the judge said. He then lied to police about his whereabouts. The judge said that Smith disposed of Carlie's backpack and clothing in several locations, and admitted doing so in a coded letter to his brother. The judge said that at 11 years of age, Carlie knew what was happening to her and realized she was going to die. He said the court may never know how long it took for Carlie to be unconscious, she had already suffered unspeakable terror and physical terror at Joseph Smith's hands.

The judge said that beyond any reasonable doubt, Carlie's death was heinous and torturous. And that has been assigned great weight in the sentencing.

For the defendant to achieve his goal of preying on a young child, the judge said, Smith drove Carlie to a remote area in order to rape her. He said it was a deliberate and selfish act.

On March 6, 2003, Smith had been convicted on drug charges. That is why he was on probation, according to the judge.

Distributed by Internet Broadcasting Systems, Inc.

Woman Who Married Child Gets Jail Time

POSTED: 7:52 am EST March 16, 2006

UPDATED: 8:04 am EST March 16, 2006

GAINESVILLE, Ga. -- A woman who married the 15-year-old friend of one of her sons pleaded guilty Wednesday to statutory rape and was sentenced to nine months in jail.

Lisa Lynnette Clark, 37, was also forbidden to have any contact with her teenage husband -- the alleged father of her 1-month-old son -- until at least his 17th birthday. After her release, she will be on probation until 2010.

Clark will also not be allowed to have contact with any children other than her own, and will be required to register as a sex offender, prosecutor Lee Darragh said.

If she violates any of the conditions, a judge could sentence her to 20 years in jail.

Clark was arrested in November on charges of statutory rape, child molestation and enticing a minor. A few days before her arrest, she married the boy under a 1962 Georgia law that allows children of any age to get married if the bride-to-be is pregnant. Clark gave birth on Feb. 11.

The wedding prompted Georgia lawmakers to revisit the state's marriage laws, and last month the House voted to bar teens under 16 from marrying without juvenile court permission. The Senate has not taken up the bill.

The boy's grandmother, Judy Hayles, has said her grandson will seek a divorce and undergo intense counseling.

Clark's attorney, Daniel Sammons, said the boy wants to continue the marriage: "He loves Lisa Clark and wishes to have a life together and raise their child."

After Clark's arrest, the boy bolted from a detention center in Georgia and was found in Cleveland. Investigators said Clark contacted him while he was gone.

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Michigan Report

March 15, 2006

GRANHOLM CALLS FOR STORES TO SUPPORT VIDEO GAME BOYCOTT

Governor Jennifer Granholm is calling on retailers across the state to join in a boycott of a video game that opponents say glamorizes cop killing.

A number of state Democrats, along with Ms. Granholm, have said they support a proposed boycott of "25 to Life" proposed by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.

Ms. Granholm sent a letter to retailers across the state asking them not to stock the game. "Taking this game off your shelves is not only the best way to ensure that it does not end up in the hands of children, it also sends a message of support to our law enforcement community that we will not support those who would profit from the production and sale of such games, no matter what the intended audience," Ms. Granholm wrote in her letter.

A law the state enacted last year making it illegal to sell or rent adult-themed games to children is now held up in a court dispute, and Ms. Granholm asked for the retailers to remove the "25 to Life" game while the dispute remains in court.

McDowell, Wallin issue 'clarification' on article about video game

Petoskey News Review

Tuesday, March 14, 2006 2:28 PM EST

Rep. Gary McDowell, D-Rudyard, on Monday issued a clarification of a press release that was the basis for an article that appeared on page 3 of the Wednesday, March 8, Petoskey News-Review about the boycott of the violent video game called "25 to Life," which glorifies the shooting of police officers.

McDowell said Emmet County Sheriff Pete Wallin was not one of the law enforcement officers at the press conference in the Sault, nor did Wallin say he "joined state House Democrats" or "stood behind" McDowell in the matter.

Wallin said the quote should have read:

"I agree with State Rep. Gary McDowell's proposed resolution regarding the boycott of the video game called '25 to Life.' Our kids are exploited enough today, with other video games and violence on television. We don't need another game that shows our kids how to kill police officers."

Lansing State Journal

Letters

March 16, 2006

Use Web shield

The LSJ series highlighting the dangers in the online world is a good reminder for parents to be vigilant in monitoring children's Internet activities. One way to help reduce the amount of inappropriate electronic messages to which children have access is to use the Protect MI Child registry. It's designed to shield children from messages that promote products that are illegal for minors to possess or purchase, e.g., tobacco, alcohol, gambling and pornography.

Parents can now register e-mail addresses to which minors have access, as well as instant message IDs, text messaging devices and fax numbers. Senders have 30 days to remove registered contact points from their electronic mailing lists.

If a registered contact point receives a prohibited message, a complaint may be filed with the state. I encourage parents to register e-mail addresses and other contact points by visiting the Protect MI Child Web site: michigan.gov/protectmichild.

J. Peter Lark
chairman
Michigan Public Service Commission

Lansing State Journal

Letters

March 16, 2006

Parents must parent

I'm only 19. I've been playing video games since I was 6. I'd guess that I've been playing violent ones since I was 10. In the 13 years I've played video games, I've never once killed anyone "because I saw it in a game." I've never even thought about it.

What people need to start realizing is that, yes, our children are impressionable, but just as with movies and music, there are rating systems to ensure children aren't playing these games. It hardly seems fair to blame the movie industry if a parent takes their child to an R-rated movie and they see violent images therein.

Why should it be fair to blame the video game industry if the same happens?

America needs to step up and admit that parents need to start taking charge in their children's lives. Stop blaming a regulated entertainment business.

David Dill
East Lansing

Mother speaks out in 'Roe v. Wade for Men' case

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By JEAN SPENNER
BAY CITY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

The lawsuit against her is foolish, says the Saginaw Township woman whose former boyfriend doesn't want to support their child.

Lauren Wells broke her silence Tuesday to denounce the suit and express her disappointment in Matt Dubay, also of Saginaw Township.

"The direct and indirect disruption caused by this frivolous legal action must end," Wells said in a written statement her Saginaw attorney, Lawrence William "Bill" Smith, released Tuesday.

Wells, 20, who is attending college and works for a wireless phone company, has declined personal interviews.

Wells and Dubay, 25, a computer technician, have an 8-month-old daughter, Elisabeth.

Dubay last week filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Bay City against Wells, who gave birth to a child he did not want. The National Center for Men, a men's rights organization based in Long Island, N.Y., also is filing the lawsuit.

Wells, who gave one brief interview before declining numerous media requests, said she hopes the court quickly dismisses the action.

"I believe life begins at conception and blossoms," she said. "I take responsibility for my acts and will do my best as an adult and mother to protect and provide for our daughter.

Elisabeth is a "vibrant, healthy baby" who is "loved dearly, and although her father has chosen not to participate in her life," she deserves financial support, Wells said.

Wells and Dubay must take responsibility for their actions, she said.

"My focus is on providing a nurturing home for our baby," Wells said. "I am disappointed that Matt has decided not to participate in Elisabeth's life so far and has instead chosen to contest any responsibility from our consensual actions."

The Saginaw County Friend of the Court has ordered Dubay to pay \$500 a month in child support to Wells and their daughter.

Dubay claims that Wells knew he didn't want to have a child with her and assured him repeatedly that, because of a physical condition, she could not get pregnant.

Saginaw County court files show that Dubay acknowledged paternity Aug. 24.

Dubay has said he doesn't expect the suit to succeed but wants to spark debate. His suit contends that the lack of male reproductive rights violates the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause.

The lawsuit already has a nickname - Roe v. Wade for Men, a take-off on the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling establishing a woman's right to have an abortion.

Accept fatherhood

Non-marital sex imposes risks, implies responsibilities

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, March 16, 2006

Sexual freedom has long been said to discourage gallantry, but will it destroy fatherhood as well? One could reasonably fear so by the ice-cold, cynical view of motherhood that jumps off the pages of the National Center for Men's trial balloon lawsuit.

The center has chosen Matt Dubay, 25, of Saginaw as its poster boy for liberation, as Dubay fights for freedom from court-ordered support on a child he fathered with an ex-girlfriend. Dubay is asking a U.S. District Court in Michigan to act as his magic wand to make disappear all the effects of his voluntary sexual relationship with the mother of his child - so he implies in the lawsuit cutely titled *Roe v. Wade for Men*. He contends that the mother had the options of abortion and adoption at her disposal, and reasons that as she did not avail herself to them, let her pay the full shot for raising his baby.

That position does not represent freedom, but tyranny. Abortion remains morally abhorrent to many, and is often looked upon as a solution of last resort, even by those who believe it should remain legal. To suggest that a woman agree to adoption against her will after giving birth represents a brutality that even the most oppressive regimes would avoid.

Dubay contends he had been led to believe his sexual partner was medically incapable of conceiving a child. Whatever her condition, or whatever birth control measures are relied upon by any couples, sex remains biologically, emotionally, spiritually and socially connected to procreation. To suggest otherwise is to try to subvert human nature.

Dubay probably is not after anything so complex, but just wants total freedom to move mechanically in a sexual world as if humanity were not involved. It therefore comes as no surprise to hear that he expects to lose his case. Gallantry and fatherhood are mightily threatened, but not yet dead in this society. Even the crafters of this lawsuit can see that much.

Daddy dearest: Equal protections?

The Saginaw News

Letters

Thursday, March 16, 2006

Editor, The News:

I found Matt Dubay's legal case pretty humorous. ("Opting out of fatherhood?" March 9)
I don't really see what his case is. He can't really beat the courts when it comes to child support for his daughter. Given his financial circumstances, \$500 is a bit much for support. That is unfair.

Women should be made responsible on their end for birth control. Many of them do like to entrap affluent or well-off men by getting pregnant. That is a dirty tactic many women use for a quick trip to financial security. I really have to wonder if some of these women need upwards of \$5,000 to \$20,000 a month to support a child with a celebrity. I'm certain most fathers would give what they could, perhaps even more for their children without being asked.

What interests me though is how animals operate in the wild. The males have sex and then leave their mate to have the offspring and raise them. Most women freely admit men can't raise children at all. Why should our laws then encourage marriage, child support and all that, when nature has shown us that is unnatural?

Since when has it been determined that men are absolutely vital to a child's upbringing?

That is just my opinion, theory, "food for thought" on the situation; I'm not involved in Dubay's lawsuit.

If he doesn't want to pay the child support, he risks any future relationship with his daughter. His present argument is flawed though, because he consented to the child the minute he, well, you know what.

What he and the National Center for Men need to do is fight excessive child support decisions, and perhaps whether the state should legally support and enforce a system, period.

Justin Sears

Saginaw Township

The man's home

Editor, The News:

Matt Dubay's desire to "abort" his parental obligations is not a father's right issue. ("A 'champion' for men dragged into fatherhood," March 10)

While the fact that fathers are not treated equally in cases of divorce and out-of-wedlock births may have motivated Dubay to file his lawsuit, what he is requesting is not the desire of the vast majority of fathers seeking equal treatment in family court.

Despite state law requiring child support to be based on the income of both parents and the needs of the child, the courts do not require the so-called custodial parent (mostly mothers) to allocate any of her income to the needs of the children in the so-called non-custodial parent's (mostly

fathers) home. How can a father afford to give a child emotional support if he is not allocated resources by the courts to cover the costs associated with providing for the children when the children are in his home?

Dubay's lawsuit is a men's rights issue, in an effort to have the equal option of choice of parenthood that mothers enjoy via Roe v. Wade.

I believe this lawsuit was motivated by the lack of equal treatment that fathers experience in family courts. Both parents must allocate a portion of their income to the children's needs in the other parent's home.

This is the law and the Friend of the Court and family courts ignore the law as it pertains to the calculation of child support. In doing so, the state routinely deprives fathers of equal protection.

Keith Hieber
Lapeer

Perils of choice

Editor, The News:

Once upon a time, a long, long time before, there lived a Supreme King in the Land of Choice. One day a woman came to the Supreme King and said unto him, "I have made the choice which you granted long, long ago, to have sex with a man, and he with me.

"The consequence of my choice now involves a third party. I choose to be free of that consequence. I am asking you to grant me the right to terminate the third party; and further, that the third party have no choices whatsoever, and that only I can choose choices on its behalf.

"Secondly, if I choose not to terminate the third party, that I remain free of further consequences.

"Thirdly, I ask that you grant the man no choice but to support the third party if I so choose."

The Supreme King said, "I choose to grant all that you ask." And many professional terminator businesses and counselors sprang up across the land. And half the kingdom rejoiced.

Thirty years later a man appeared before the Supreme King and said unto him, "I too desire to choose not to be accountable. I choose that you choose my choice, to have the same choices the woman has."

The Supreme King pondered the dilemma.

Who then shall be accountable for the consequences of the choices these people have made?

"Not I," said the woman.

"Not I," said the man.

"Not I," said the kingdom.

Silence from the third party.

What to choose, what to choose, what to choose.

Terry L. Duperon Sr.
Saginaw

Son accused of ignoring dying mom

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Nate Reens
The Grand Rapids Press

REED CITY -- A former Reed City man is accused of leaving his mother to die in her home two years ago while he cashed her Social Security checks and used the money to buy alcohol and rent videos, state Attorney General Mike Cox said.

Cox announced today his office has obtained an arrest warrant for Dennis J. Dell'eva, 51, on charges of involuntary manslaughter and second-degree abuse of a vulnerable adult connected to the Jan. 19, 2004, death of his mother, Estelle Dell'eva.

The 74-year-old Reed City woman was found buried under blankets and trash, severely dehydrated and malnourished one day before her death. She was hospitalized, but died as a result of those ailments and multiple bedsores, Cox said.

The home, at 21565 Nicholas Lane, had no heat and no running water. Dennis Dell'eva was supposed to be looking after his mother, who was disabled and unable to care for herself.

"I have literally looked at hundreds of homicides, but even for me, this is a gruesome case," Cox said in a prepared statement. "Ms. Dell'eva's son cashed her Social Security checks, but not to take care of his mother; instead, he made trips to the liquor store to buy whiskey and rent videos. "There are consequences for those who shirk or abandon their responsibility to provide care. In this case, those consequences will be severe."

Dennis Dell'eva faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of involuntary manslaughter. Dell'eva has not been arrested and is believed to be living in Clinton Township in Macomb County.

A neighbor who lived near the Dell'eva home in Osceola County said the house has been vacant for two years and looks to be in the same state of disrepair as when Dell'eva left it.

Osceola authorities, who originally investigated the woman's death, had to use breathing apparatus to go in and retrieve the man's mother, the neighbor said.

"The lawn was never mowed and it didn't look like anybody lived there when they were in it," the neighbor said, declining to give her name. "It was an eyesore."

The neighbor said that, before police told them, she and her husband were unaware Estelle Dell'eva lived in the home.

Bush Prescribes Family Help on Drug Plan

By Cameron W. Barr
Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, March 16, 2006; Page A04

Faced with a persistent questioner who asked him what could be done to help her elderly mother understand Medicare's new prescription drug plan, President Bush offered a suggestion that at first elicited shocked gasps, and then supportive applause, from an audience of retirees in Silver Spring yesterday.

"Look, I'm not going to tell you your business, but I think it's your responsibility to help your mom," Bush told Wendy Meyeroff. She had asked him to consider extending the May 15 deadline for registering for the new benefit without a penalty, but Bush refused.

"No," he said. "And the reason why is there's got to be a fixed time for people to sign up." Bush conducted a town hall meeting at Riderwood Village, a retirement community of 2,300 people that straddles the border dividing Montgomery and Prince George's counties, to encourage seniors to learn about the 10-week-old plan, and he promised that it would save many of them money.

He had a similar event in Canandaigua, N.Y., on Tuesday -- part of a stepped-up effort to promote a major Republican initiative that Democrats have branded a disaster. This week, a group led by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) asked the administration to extend the penalty-free enrollment period.

Meyeroff's remarks about the difficulty of helping her ill, 75-year-old mother sign up for the benefit echoed criticism about the program from health care advocates and many seniors. "The thought of doing it is good, but the manner in which it's being carried out is not," said Doris Terry, a retired health education specialist, as she waited for Bush to arrive in a Riderwood hall draped in black and decorated with signs reading "Strengthening Medicare."

"It's too complex," Terry said.

Rather than offer a plan directly from Medicare, the government's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services contracts with private insurers to provide the coverage. Most seniors have dozens of plans from which to choose. Those who decide after May 15 will pay an extra premium of 1 percent for every month they wait.

In his remarks before a room full of cameras and about 300 retirees, Bush conceded that there has been confusion but defended the profusion of options that the program offers. "With more choices to choose from, you can better design a program that meets your needs," he said.

Maryland Democrats used Bush's presence as an opportunity to attack the plan. "Unfortunately, this prescription drug program is helping America's seniors the way the federal government helped the victims of Hurricane Katrina," Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) said at a rally in Silver Spring sponsored by an advocacy group.

Several Riderwood audience members said in interviews that they had decided not to register for the benefit because their existing insurance offered better coverage.

Bush said 26 million people had registered for the new plan, but that figure includes 21 million who were already receiving prescription drug coverage. About 43 million people are eligible,

and analysts say the government has struggled to register the very poorest seniors, who stand to gain the most.

Meyeroff, who questioned Bush about her mother, said she didn't "totally disagree with him. But that's not a good answer for everyone." A health editor for Erickson Retirement Communities, which owns Riderwood, Meyeroff said she was speaking on her own behalf.

Audience member Alan Mayers, a retired federal worker, said Bush's answer didn't account for seniors who don't have help from a child. "I think that was a little bit heartless, but consistent with the general approach of the administration toward safety nets," he said.

Staff writer Ceci Connolly contributed to this report.

Posted: 3-15-2006

Health Expo at West Shore Thursday

By KEVIN BRACISZESKI
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

Area health care and human service agencies will again be featured at Thursday's 6th Annual Health Expo held at West Shore Community College.

The expo is free and open to the public, and it will give people opportunities to sample products and/or services — including back massages, hearing tests, acupuncture, food samples and dietary supplements — offered by area vendors.

"It's for area people, so they can find out what is offered in the local area," said Carla Shay, director of the WSCC Women's Resource Center. "You may not need the services now, but in the future you, or a loved one or friend may need these services." The Health expo is sponsored by WSCC's Women's Resource Center and the Allied Health and Nursing Department. It is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the atrium of the WSCC Technical Center.

Professionals in a variety of physical, educational, medical, mental, and holistic health fields will provide materials on a variety of health-related topics. Shay said some vendors have also said they would provide free massage and acupuncture during the expo.

"It's to show the community what we have in Mason, Manistee, Lake and Oceana counties," Shay said.

She said last year's health expo attracted about 300 people and she is hoping for more this year, especially since the expo has already attracted about 10 more vendors than last year.

Vendors for this year's health expo are: Andre Bosse Kids' House, Cleanse For Life, Memorial Medical Center, West Shore Chapter of the Red Cross, Medicare Type D overview, Juice Plus, West Michigan Community Mental Health, Port City Organics, Curves of Manistee, West Shore Family YMCA, DayBreak Adult Day Services, Respect Life, Sackrider Center, Health eFx, MSU Extension, FiveCAP, Beltone Hearing Center, WSCC STARs, Oceana County Sheriff's Office, West Shore Pregnancy Center, Nikken Wellness, C.O.V.E. and Choices of Manistee.

For additional information please contact the Women's Resource Center at (231) 845-0822.

kevinb@ludingtondailynews.com
843-1122, ext. 346

TEMPERS SPARK OVER HEATING RESOLUTION

The Senate Technology and Energy Committee approved a resolution urging additional funding for heating assistance to low-income families, but only after tempers flared over a motion by the sponsor to discharge HR 71 and over comments made to the committee chair on the Senate floor.

The resolution calls on Congress to approve additional funding for the Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program.

Committee Chair Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) took Sen. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) to task for stating in his motion in the Senate last week to discharge the resolution that the committee had refused to conduct a hearing on it. Mr. Patterson said the fact that the committee had not yet conducted the hearing did not itself constitute a refusal to consider the resolution.

"I thought you were waiting for a time when it was cold," Mr. Patterson said of what he saw as Mr. Schauer's delay in requesting a hearing.

But Mr. Schauer said he had requested a hearing when the resolution was introduced and had pushed for the discharge after the U.S. Senate passed a measure increasing funding for the program. "I went through the regular channels," he said, adding that he had not gotten a response to his request for a hearing.

Mr. Patterson questioned whether the timing of the discharge motion was for political gain rather than to effect action on the resolution.

Mr. Patterson's anger turned to Sen. Burton Leland (D-Detroit) when the latter accused him of badgering Mr. Schauer. Mr. Patterson took the opportunity to ask Mr. Leland what he had meant when, during the morning Senate session, he had told Mr. Patterson to watch his back.

While insisting that the comment was not meant as a threat and demanding that Mr. Patterson stop badgering Mr. Schauer, Mr. Patterson called him out of order. The situation devolved to something reminiscent of the final court scene in *And Justice for All* with the two calling each other out of order.

Mr. Patterson later demanded an apology from Mr. Leland for interrupting the meeting, to which he replied, "I apologize to the people out there that the chairman's acting like a complete jerk today."

While he approved reporting the resolution, Mr. Patterson also argued that it would need some language clarification before it should be approved by the full chamber.

MIRS, Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Senate Heated On Home Heating

Sen. Bruce **PATTERSON** (R-Canton) accused the Senate Minority Floor Leader today in his Senate Technology and Energy Committee of playing politics on the rising energy cost issue. The ensuing heated exchange, prompted committee member Sen. Burton **LELAND** (D-Detroit) to apologize to the audience for Patterson being a "jerk" and Patterson to respond that Leland was an expert on the subject.

The fireworks exploded over SR 0071, which calls on Congress to put more money into a program designed to help the poor pay their energy bills. Introduced by Senate Minority Floor Leader Mark **SCHAUER** (D-Battle Creek) in October, the resolution was practically a carbon copy of a resolution Patterson sponsored years ago in the House requesting the same thing.

Last week, Schauer moved to discharge the resolution out of Patterson's committee, which the latter objected to and resented. Patterson told *MIRS* that Schauer had told Patterson back in January that the resolution was not ready to go, yet.

Patterson, also believing the resolution needed work, opted against doing anything with it. So when Schauer put Patterson and Republicans on the spot last week with a discharge request on a substantively unchanged version of SR 0071, Patterson got his Republican colleagues to ice Schauer's motion until he could take up the resolution in his committee.

So today, Patterson put Schauer on the witness stand with the intention of exposing Schauer as a novice on the subject of energy costs, but an expert (as chair of the Senate Democrats' campaign committee) on political issues. After the committee, Patterson noted that he represents a politically marginal Senate district in suburban Wayne County and it's not a stretch to see Schauer's motion last week was designed to corner Patterson into voting against helping the poor pay their energy bills as opposed to advancing constructive policy on the issue.

Schauer repeatedly defended himself as being genuinely concerned about the plight of the poor and his desire to see the federal government increase its funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to at least \$3.4 billion.

But Patterson kept prodding Schauer as to why he wanted SR 0071 moved now, with the worst of winter long gone and spring only days away.

"This issue is on the table in Washington now," Schauer said. "We have the opportunity to speak with a collective voice."

"Your testimony is not totally truthful," Patterson opined, arguing that if he were interested in speaking with one voice, he'd have introduced a concurrent resolution that would require the support of the House. Schauer said he could have done that, but "it didn't occur to me to do this."

Patterson then had Schauer sifting through papers about certain nuances of his resolution including the difference between energy "costs" and "prices." Schauer admitted he didn't know the ins and outs of the country's energy situation as well as Patterson did, but it didn't make him any less

concerned about the poor in his district.

At about the point Patterson and Schauer were in the midst of talking over one another, Leland commented that he felt Patterson was "badgering the witness." Patterson then turned his guns on Leland, mentioning a conversation on the Senate floor the two had had earlier in the day in which Leland allegedly told Patterson that if he insisted on going after Schauer in committee today he "better watch his back."

Leland said the comment was more congenial jostling than anything, but Patterson didn't see it that way. He said Leland was out of order. Leland said that may be true but Patterson was not being civil to the witness.

"Bruce, I didn't threaten you," Leland said. "You're not conducting yourself like a member of the Senate. You're taking this over the top."

The discussion returned briefly to Schauer speaking about how he had run the resolution past U.S. Rep. Joe **SCHWARZ** (R-Battle Creek). Meanwhile, Leland walked over to Vice Chair Wayne **KUIPERS** (R-Holland) and Rep. Patty **BIRKHOLZ** (R-Saugatuck). He whispered something to them and was walking back to his chair when Patterson asked Leland if he was done interrupting the committee.

Leland said he didn't feel like he was doing anything of the sort, but Patterson felt otherwise. He asked Leland to apologize to the audience for interrupting the proceedings.

"I apologize to the people out there that the chair acting like a complete jerk," Leland said. Patterson responded that Leland was an expert on jerks.

At that point Patterson floated some amendment ideas past Schauer. Would he be opposed to mixing in discussion about coal-fired electric or nuclear or fuel exploration in the Rockies, etc. Schauer said he'd defer to the expertise of the committee on any changes it may want to make to the resolution.

In the end, Patterson suggested no changes to SR 0071 and asked if the committee wanted to move the resolution out of committee as is. Sen. Buzz **THOMAS** (D-Detroit) said yes and Leland seconded the motion. It passed 8-0 with Patterson voting yes.

"I think the resolution needs a lot of work," Patterson concluded. "I don't appreciate being told that this committee refused to take up this legislation."

"Thank you for your action today," Schauer said.

"I wish you well," Patterson said. "I don't think this is in its proper form."

The Senate Democrats released a press release this afternoon entitled, "Schauer Successful in Fight for Consumer Help for Home Heating Costs."

Catholic group: no adoptions to gays

Group ends all child placement work to keep kids out of gay homes

By Lisa Keen

Originally printed 3/16/2006 (Issue 1411 - Between The Lines News)

BOSTON - In yet another confrontation between religious organizations and laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, an organization of the archdiocese of Boston has decided to end its program of helping find homes for children with severe emotional and medical needs.

The Archdiocese of Boston Catholic Charities announced March 10 that it would not seek to renew its license in June with Massachusetts to provide adoption services. Boston Archbishop Sean O'Malley, who sought an exemption from the state human rights law, said the group would end its program in order to exercise "religious freedom." He and the state's three other bishops said the state human rights law's provision against sexual orientation discrimination violates the Vatican's 2003 edict that homosexuality is "gravely immoral."

The announcement triggered numerous resignations from the Catholic Charities board. Seven members issued a joint statement saying they would not participate "in an effort to pursue legal permission to discriminate against Massachusetts citizens who want to play a part in building strong families."

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Archdiocese of San Francisco told the Boston Globe that it is now reviewing its policy of allowing adoption placements with gay and lesbian families.

Debbie Weill, executive director of Dignity USA, called the actions "very alarming and reprehensible."

"We're extremely concerned and outraged that the Catholic Church could do such a thing," said Weill. "The church is just totally forgetting about the children. The choices these children have are either to be left with no parent or to be placed with same-sex couples who have been carefully screened by these Catholic agencies.... It's outrageous that the church would act in such an un-Christ-like way."

Since 1987, the Catholic Charities group has had a contract with the state to help foster children with severe needs find homes, and the organization has obeyed the state human rights law. That law has included a prohibition on sexual orientation discrimination since 1989.

In October of last year, the Boston Globe ran an article noting that, of the 720 children the Boston-based organization has placed over the years, 13 were with gay and lesbian families.

Shortly after that article appeared, the four Catholic bishops in Massachusetts met and agreed that the placement of children with gay and lesbian families violated the Vatican's 2003 edict that homosexuality is "gravely immoral." But the Catholic Charities board voted unanimously in December to continue the placements in accordance with state law.

Following last Friday's announcement that the group would end its entire adoption program to avoid the state non-discrimination law, many of the Catholic Charities' board members resigned.

According to the Boston Herald, Catholic Charities received about \$1 million from the state in fiscal year 2005 for its adoption work. Archbishop O'Malley has been aggressive in his actions against gays since taking over from his predecessor in 2003 during the child molestation scandal that has rocked the archdiocese and the church globally. In February, Pope Benedict XVI honored him with a promotion to cardinal.

Brian Cahill, executive director of Catholic Charities in San Francisco, told the Boston Globe last week that, in five years, it had placed five of its 136 children with gay or lesbian parents. He said he is concerned that the archdiocese of San Francisco may try to order his agency to stop placements with gays, too.

According to the Boston Globe, former Archbishop William Levada, who now holds a position at the Vatican, acknowledged allowing three children to be placed with gay parents during his tenure. But Levada told the Globe that the 2003 edict from the Vatican concerning adoptions to gay families means "Catholic agencies should not place children for adoption in homosexual households."

A spokesperson for the Archdiocese of San Francisco initially defended its gay placements to the Globe but, after Levada's communication to the Globe, said it was reviewing the policy. San Francisco's new archbishop, George Niederauer, took over for Levada last month.

Equality California Executive Director Geoff Kors said, "Decisions regarding placing children in adoptive homes should be based on the best interest of the child, not prejudice against any particular group of people. Family courts and social service agencies, including Catholic Charities best serve the needs of vulnerable children by considering all qualified parents in making adoption decisions."

In Massachusetts, Republican Governor Mitt Romney has indicated he will ask the state legislature to approve a bill to give Catholic Charities and other organizations run by organized religious groups an exemption to the state human rights law's prohibition of sexual orientation discrimination.

Michigan Report

March 15, 2006

WORK FIRST CHANGES NEEDED NOW

Michigan will need to make changes now to its Work First program if it is to meet new federal requirements for welfare recipients finding and holding work, a group representing the local entities running the program told a House subcommittee on Wednesday.

The reauthorization of the federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families program continued the requirement that half of eligible families have at least one adult working, but it eliminated the credits that had been granted to states for reducing their welfare caseloads. That change was made retroactive to the current fiscal year.

Linda Kinney, executive director of the Michigan Works Association, which represents the local agencies running the Work First program, told the House Appropriations Economic Development Subcommittee that the state currently has 24 percent of its eligible recipients in approved work or training. She said it was not sufficient to wait for the budget process to be completed for the state to pick up another 26 percent.

And missing that target could cost the state \$100 million, Ms. Kinney said. "There is no way we can go from 24 percent to 50 percent in the last half of the year," she said. "We have to act now. We can't wait until October."

The administration's proposed budget includes boilerplate changes that would expand the training options available within the federal guidelines. Ms. Kinney said the state would need to spend an additional \$70 million on the new program to avoid that fine.

But she said there also needs to be some efforts to get those not working into jobs or training programs. "There are far too many people who appear to have fallen through the cracks," she said.

The association is also working with the Department of Human Services to review the people who have been deferred from work requirements, Ms. Kinney said. While the state is not requiring those people to find work, they still count among the people the federal government says should be working.

And she said the state has deferred about half of the cases the federal government has said should be participating in Work First. Of the welfare cases, she said about a third are child-only cases not subject to work requirements, a third are deferred by the state and a third are required by the state to participate in Work First.

Currently the decision on deferring cases from work requirements lies with DHS, but Ms. Kinney said she is working with the department to have that be a joint decision of DHS caseworkers and Michigan Works caseworkers.

“We still firmly believe that we need to continue providing assistance to these people to move them off welfare and into good paying jobs,” she said.

Federal rules also allow community service as one option to meet work requirements, but Ms. Kinney said the Michigan Works agencies are trying, where possible, to avoid using that option. “We don’t believe that community service provides work skills that will lead to independence,” she said.

Ms. Kinney said Michigan also is not as far behind other states in moving welfare recipients into work or job training as it appears. Other states have reported as much as 80 percent of their eligible caseload working, but she said there are currently no guidelines for reporting those figures. She expected that, with the coming reporting guidelines, compliance numbers in those states would land much closer to what Michigan is already reporting.

She said Michigan’s standards for classifying people as having found and held work are closer to what the new federal standards are expected to be.

Heartside Ministry fund for needy dries up

Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Pat Shellenbarger
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- After spending his first nine years in an orphanage in Bulgaria, after a failed adoption by a Michigan family, after a series of foster homes and a stay in a mental hospital, Nicholas Fish found himself alone on the streets of Grand Rapids.

Two days later, he walked through the door of Heartside Ministry, cold, frightened and asking for help. It came from a diminutive nun and an emergency fund created by the City Commission to help people who have nowhere else to turn.

But eight months into this fiscal year, that fund, replenished every July 1 by \$15,000 in property taxes collected in the downtown area, has run dry for the first time. That leaves those who work with the neighborhood's poor wondering where to turn when someone else needs a few dollars for a medical co-payment, a bus ticket to a job or a pair of work shoes.

The fund is exhausted because the Heartside neighborhood draws many of the city's homeless and destitute, said Marge Palmerlee, executive director of Degage Ministries, one of the nonprofit agencies that divvies out the money.

"It's very serious," she said. "We use that fund daily. We encourage people to get jobs, but they can't get there because they can't afford the bus ticket."

Nationally, the portion of the population living in poverty rose from 11.3 percent in 2000 to 12.7 percent in 2004, placing greater demands on social programs, such as food stamps and Medicaid. Facing its own tight budget, the city is in no position to pour more money into the fund, said 2nd Ward City Commissioner Rick Tormala, who pushed for its creation in 2001.

As government programs go, the Heartside Fund, also known as the Downtown Improvement District Fund, is a small but critical source of money that has helped hundreds of low-income residents. In a March 2 letter, the Heart of West Michigan United Way, which administers the fund, informed Heartside agencies the money was gone.

"I'm not sure if it reflects an increase in need or an increase in awareness for the fund," said Robert McKown, director of United Way's 2-1-1 services.

It is an increase in need, said the Rev. Barb Pekich, executive director of Heartside Ministry. In 2004, her agency helped an average of 34 people a month with money from the fund. In 2005, it jumped to an average of 75 people a month.

In her office down at Heartside Ministry, Sister Francetta McCann was trying to help 26-year-old Angela Tyler. She recently was laid off from a temporary job at Steelcase, which led to her being depressed, aggravating a chronic heart problem. She dropped out of Grand Rapids Community College and was hospitalized three times. Last week, Consumers Energy turned off her electricity for nonpayment.

In the past, Sister Francetta would have drawn money from the Heartside Fund to pay the overdue bill, but now, "I don't know for sure how I'm going to work this out."

In the two weeks since she learned the fund was empty, she has turned away 10 or 12 people seeking help.

"I think I feel as devastated as they do," she said. "I tell them, 'I'm sorry, but I can't help you.' They say, 'We know, sister. You're trying to help.'"

Many, such as Nicholas Fish, show up with nothing -- no money, no identification -- the kind of things the fund normally covers.

When he turned 19, he moved to an adult foster home in northern Kent County. When his disability checks didn't arrive on time, the home's operators drove him into the city and dumped him in the Heartside neighborhood with two garbage bags full of clothes and little else.

"He was panicking, the poor guy," Sister Francetta recalled.

She calmed him down and, drew money from the Heartside fund, got him an identity card, medication, some clothing and a place to stay.

He still doesn't have a job, but life is better now, Fish said. He shows up at Heartside Ministry most days, checks his e-mail and volunteers to help others.

"It's wonderful right now," said Fish, now 20, "really good. I want to help, because I'm part of Heartside now."

Minimum wage workers to get a raise

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

By PETER LUKE
LANSING BUREAU

LANSING - An Oct. 1 increase of \$1.80 an hour in Michigan's minimum wage is on its way to Gov. Jennifer Granholm's desk, over the objections of some lawmakers who called it a "job killer."

The Republican-run House approved the measure Tuesday, 73-34, following unanimous Senate passage last week.

Republican leadership pushed for passage of the wage increase from \$5.15 to \$6.95 an hour in an attempt to blunt the political impact of a Democratic-sponsored constitutional amendment that is likely to be on the ballot in November.

Under the bill, which Granholm supports, the wage would jump to \$7.15 an hour on July 1, 2007, and to \$7.40 an hour on July 1, 2008. The bill would be null and void if the ballot measure passes.

Mike Seward, president of the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, said he has heard little local discussion of the minimum wage issue.

"We know it is appropriate to have an active increase in the minimum wage," Seward said, but added his organization "did not take a stand" on any of the proposals.

"Those businesses that I've had general discussions with on this issue accepted an increase will pass," he said.

Any increase in minimum wage will be good news for local labor unions, said Mary Thompson, president of Catering Industry, Hospital Workers and Bartenders Local 688, based in Bangor Township.

"I hope it passes. It is definitely something we need," Thompson said.

Thompson's organization has about 700 members locally. She said a wage increase will affect all workers, not just those earning the lowest wages.

"The way minimum wage is set up right now, a family of three is left to live way below the poverty level," Thompson said. "It's been a long time coming. It will give labor something to take to the bargaining table. We in labor obviously want to see a wage increase."

Republicans fear the ballot proposal will lead to a surge in turnout by low-income voters out to give themselves a wage increase. If they already have a wage increase in hand before the election, the reasoning goes, those voters will be less likely to go to the polls.

Rep. Dianne Byrum of Onondaga, the Democratic leader in the House, said the ballot drive would continue. A public opinion survey released last week by the Lansing firm EPIC/MRA showed 74 percent public approval for a minimum wage increase.

Ken Fletcher, a lobbyist for the Michigan State AFL-CIO, conceded the ballot proposal that raises the wage to \$6.85 an hour on Jan. 1 means less money for workers in the short term. But because the constitutional change would index the wage to inflation and bar future legislatures from lowering the wage, "people in the long term would still come out better."

Republicans said they understood the political strategy of passing the minimum wage now as a means of pre-empting the ballot issue, but said it violated a basic GOP principle that government shouldn't be setting wage rates.

"Whenever you raise the minimum wage, you lose jobs," said Rep. Fulton Sheen, R-Plainwell.

"Principles and policy should trump politics."

A majority of the Republican caucus in the House voted against the wage increase following a weekend lobbying effort by small business employers. The GOP-run Senate surprised those business groups last Thursday by running the bill with no advance warning.

Barry Cargill, a lobbyist for the Small Business Association of Michigan, said some of his members would have to "fold up shop," if required to raise the pay of their workers.

The wage increase is worth \$72 a week for someone working 40 hours a week.

Minimum-wage hike a windfall or job-killer?

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Thursday, March 16, 2006

By Matt Bach and Rhonda S. Sanders
mbach@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6330

A plan to raise the state's minimum wage by \$1.80 an hour has McDonald's worker DeShawn Dumas jumping for joy.

But it has small-business owners such as Dan Brown crying foul and fearing it could hurt business and even force some of them to close.

"I'm lovin' it," said Dumas, 17, a 10th-grader at International Academy of Flint, who makes \$5.25 an hour. "Money has not come easy, and I have to work hard to achieve the money I want."

Brown, owner of Rollhaven Skate & Fun Centers in Grand Blanc Township, Flushing and Owosso, has a different take.

He called the minimum-wage increase "unconscionable" and an "absolute atrocity" that will devastate small businesses.

"I am not sure I will be able to continue to operate," said Brown, who recently expanded his business by adding two centers.

The wage proposal, already cleared by the state Senate, was approved by the state House on Tuesday and is expected to be signed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

It's a thorny issue in a gubernatorial election year, and Republicans have accused Democrats of trying to make political hay out of it to boost Granholm's re-election chances.

The proposal would increase the current wage of \$5.15 an hour to \$6.95 an hour in October and to \$7.15 in July 2007. The minimum, which hasn't increased in nine years, would rise to \$7.40 an hour in July 2008.

The legislative action was largely a pre-emptive strike against a petition drive to place a minimum-wage increase in the state constitution.

QUICK TAKE

About the minimum-wage hike

The state House voted this week to raise the state's minimum wage by \$1.80 an hour. The Senate already has approved it, and the measure is expected to be signed by

Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Here's how it would work:

CURRENT

MINIMUM AGE:

\$5.15 an hour

PROPOSED: \$6.95

an hour in October

\$7.15 in July 2007

\$7.40 in July 2008

The ballot initiative would tie future minimum-wage increases to inflation; the current proposal doesn't.

The ballot measure also would increase the minimum wage for employees who receive tips from \$2.65 to \$4.35 an hour. The lawmakers' plan doesn't include such a hike.

But even some who stand to reap a small windfall from the hike don't support it.

Mary Sullenger is a high school senior working two low-paying, part-time jobs to save for college, pay \$100 in monthly rent and afford a cellphone.

She believes the increase is too much and fears it will cause her employers to cut her hours or, worse, eliminate her job.

"I think it's stupid," said Sullenger, a senior at Flint Southwestern Academy and the GASC Technology Center.

"It should go up, but not that much. Most (business) owners are greedy, so they are not going to want to pay. Instead, they'll hire less people who will have to work harder for their pay."

Her concerns have merit, some area business owners said.

Brown, owner of Rollhaven, said he rarely hires people at minimum wage because he is selective about the quality of his staff. But the increase puts pressure on him to boost staff wages above the \$6-\$7 an hour he currently pays.

Some of his longtime employees already earn more than \$6.95 per hour, but Brown expects he'll have to pay them more to stay competitive.

"I could deal with 20 cents an hour or even 50 cents. That still would have an effect, but to drive it up \$1.80. In one fell swoop, my No. 1 expense has increased by 20 to 30 percent," he said.

That means passing the cost on to customers, but Brown said he doesn't believe the market can support it.

"This will close the doors of many small businesses in our state, no question about it," he said.

And that hurts not only his family, but the families of his 55 employees, Brown said.

He said he plans to call legislators and business associates to try to get the increase amended.

"Let the market drive the wages, not the Legislature," he said.

ADRIAN DAILY TELEGRAM EDITORIAL: Wage hike likely to raise unemployment

Wednesday, March 15, 2006 9:16 AM EST

AT ISSUE: The minimum wage increase passed by the state Legislature.

OUR VIEW: Raising the rate will not help the state's economy, but it will serve the state's politicians.

Appearances can be deceiving, and Michigan residents should be warned that little is what it appears when it comes to Tuesday's passage of a minimum wage increase.

On the surface, the bill approved by the Michigan House seems to be a model of bipartisan cooperation. The plan originally was drafted by Democrats, was pushed through the Legislature in less than a week by Republicans and now has Gov. Jennifer Granholm promising to sign it. Supporters say the new rate will help Michigan's working families. It raises the minimum rate from \$5.15 per hour - the same as the federal government's - to \$6.95 effective Oct. 1, and to \$7.40 by July 1, 2008.

However, what state government passes in haste the rest of us may repent at leisure.

First, Republicans are guilty of grabbing a wage hike bill from Democrats as a ploy to head off a proposed state ballot question. The ballot initiative worried GOP officials for three key reasons: It would have tied future increases to the rate of inflation, cemented the hike into the state constitution and likely would have boosted Democratic turnout in the November election. Co-opting the Democrats' bill was a cynical ploy by the GOP.

But Democrats and others selling the increase share plenty of blame for misrepresentation, pushing it as a family anti-poverty measure.

"Workers shouldn't be working full-time and raising children in poverty," Democratic Sen. Mark Schauer of Battle Creek said. Actually, only about three percent of Michigan workers earn \$5.15 per hour. Most of those employees are likely to be high school or college students working part-time jobs, not moms or dads raising families.

Raising minimum wage also does nothing to help those without jobs. In fact, they become less likely to find work as employers watch the cost of entry-level employees jump by 44 percent. A 2000 Federal Reserve study reported that just a 10 percent minimum wage hike erodes employment by 2 to 3 percent, while also contributing to inflation.

Finally, Granholm will deserve plenty of criticism if she signs the bill as expected. The state's jobs outlook is fragile enough, and creating the eighth-highest minimum wage law in the U.S. is likely to scare off more potential employers. One might argue that we don't want low-paying jobs. The truth, however, is that it's much better to have a surplus of jobs and let supply and demand force wages up than to start with a jobs deficit and resort to legislation hoping to reach the same goal.

Businesses are willing to pay higher wages to compete for competent, reliable workers who actually show up when expected. Competition for good people is what drives wages higher. Artificial moves such as this only force business owners to either reduce staffing or raise prices, both of which will do more harm than good in Michigan at present.

The reality behind the appearance is that politicians are less likely to be the ones added to the unemployment lines.

Higher wages, less employment

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Editor, The Saginaw News:

Please stop Senate Bill 318 immediately! A raise to Michigan's minimum wage would be absolutely devastating to our already suffering economy. If this bill passes, the unemployment rate will increase.

Minimum wage is an approximation of the "market equilibrium point" of labor. This is the point at which the supply curve meets the demand curve. The result on the X-axis is the "quantity of labor demanded" and the result on the Y-axis is the "price." As markets demand things like skilled labor or advanced college degrees, these curves shift resulting in different quantities and prices demanded.

Setting a minimum wage is called a "price floor." Think of it as a thick black line across the graph of supply and demand curves. The idea is, if the market equilibrium point falls below the price floor, then the employed labor force will receive the price floor, which is above the market wage.

This has a major impact on supply and demand. Because the price floor is above market equilibrium, the floor line now intersects the supply and demand curves separately. It makes perfect sense: more people want to work (quantity of labor supplied) because they can make more money, and less people are hired (quantity of labor demanded) because companies cannot afford as many man-hours as they could before.

So we can conclude that some Michigan residents will receive a raise, but we can also expect a substantial rise in unemployment.

Matthew Davey
Saginaw Township



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

Media Advisory

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Kent County collaborative receives \$60,000 Great Start Collaborative grant

WHAT: Ceremonial check presentation for grant to Kent county collaborative from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC).

The \$60,000 grant will be used to support the local Great Start Collaborative, bringing together the public, private and non-profit sectors to develop a long-standing, sustained focus on early childhood development and care.

WHEN: Friday, March 17, 2006
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

WHERE: Kent ISD Educational Service Center
Rogue Room
2930 Knapp NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
(Park in Parking Lot 11)

WHO: Speakers at this event include:
Marianne Udow, DHS director and ECIC board member
Mike Foley, chief operating officer, ECIC
Susan Broman, ECIC board member
Mike Weiler, Kent ISD Superintendent
Sen. Bill Hardiman (invited)
Sen. Ken Sikkema (invited)
Rep. Dave Hildenbrand
Rep. Jerry Kooiman
Rep. Tom Pearce
Rep. Mike Sak
Rep. Kevin Green (invited)
Rep. Glenn Steil (invited)

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